

To the Pirate Party Members

The Liberal Democrats support small government, less regulation and lower taxes.

We have considered the policies of the Pirate Party and noted our comments below.

We agree with the vast majority of Pirate Party policies and hope to work with you closely. We wish you well in your campaign.

Declaration of platform and principles

The Liberal Democrats strongly support freedom of speech, liberty, privacy and transparency of government institutions.

Copyright

We do not have a formal policy on copyright but would support abolition of copyright on government produced works as specified in your policy.

We support open access on government funded research provided it does not infringe property or contractual rights.

We oppose draconian surveillance and enforcement measures against personal use copyright infringement. In addition, we oppose broad monitoring by the state for copyright infringement, with monitoring only permitted with probable cause and a court-issued warrant which is specific to the individual or group to be monitored.

We do not have a position on the other details of your policy but anticipate many of our members would support them.

Patents

We do not have a formal policy on patents, but anticipate many of our members would support your policy.

We would support a reduction in patent duration subject to products having long development times (eg pharmaceuticals) being granted extensions.

We agree that some software patents are overly broad and trivial.

We agree that genes and living organisms should not be patentable. Patents should be restricted to novel creations, not just novel discoveries.

We do not support the abolition of patents on pharmaceuticals nor your policy for greater government funding of medical research. We strongly believe in free markets without government involvement.

Privacy

We entirely support the Pirate Party's policy with respect to privacy, although our focus is on the need for protection from government surveillance more than businesses. We oppose all government surveillance without a court issued warrant.

We agree entirely about "security theatre".

Reform of democratic institutions

We support the Pirate Party's platform on the Reform of Democratic Institutions with respect to transparency, whistle blower protection, freedom of information and electronic voting transparency.

We support the Pirate Party's position on electoral participation and your opposition to the high nomination fees.

We do not support your policy with respect to the disclosure of all donations. Our concern is that this would compromise the privacy of small donors, who may fear losing their job or suffering some other penalty after making a small donation which would be placed on the public record.

Even laws prohibiting discrimination based on political beliefs are unlikely to prevent this from happening, as discrimination on a particular ground is difficult to prove.

Digital liberties

We strongly agree with Pirate Party policy opposing government efforts to censor the internet and force data retention laws on ISPs.

We disagree with Pirate Party policy on net neutrality as we are opposed to government involvement in or regulation of the internet, which would be required to enforce net neutrality. We foresee government officers going onto the premises of ISPs and checking their routing software and hardware, likely exposing private customer data in the process.

We also are concerned that "net-neutrality" would hinder the development of high Quality of Service applications, like net based medicine.

Support for Fibre-to-the-Premises Infrastructure Projects

Whilst we don't disagree with allowing ISPs to roll out fibre, we consider this should be driven by consumer demand and the private sector, not government pork-barrelling.

Internet infrastructure has been provided for many years by entrepreneurs responding to consumer demand, and handing this process over to politicians like Stephen Conroy will result in more expense and less progress.

Government control of internet infrastructure also makes censorship of the internet easier. Indeed opposition from privately owned ISPs contributed significantly to defeating Conroy's proposal to impose internet filters.

Bill of Rights

We are wary of efforts to incorporate a range of rights into a Bill of Rights. Nonetheless, we applaud the Pirate Party's list of rights.

We would be concerned that if a process to create a Bill of Rights began currently, many rights would be included "for our safety", among them rights such as the "right not to be offended".

Whilst not opposing the intention of a Bill of Rights, the Liberal Democrats prefer to put our efforts into protecting our rights through legislative and political reform.

Tax/Welfare

The Liberal Democrats strongly support raising the tax free threshold (our policy states \$40,000) and removing welfare churn.

We support the Pirate Party's message of lower tax to improve the international competitiveness of Australian business.

We oppose a global transaction tax as much financial activity is actually to reduce risk (eg airlines will buy options on jet fuel to reduce their exposure to price rises). Taxing this activity would likely increase risk, and as markets will become less liquid, price changes will be even more dramatic when they occur.

We also have concerns that such transaction taxes would be targeted against activity the government decided was "undesirable" such as Bitcoin, by declaring it "financial speculation".

Energy

The Liberal Democrats do not deny the likelihood of human caused climate change, but do not support government action until there is greater international agreement.

We note that Australia produces less carbon emissions than countries like China per unit of output, so that climate change action at this time is likely to move emission intensive industry to China.

We believe carbon emissions are best reduced at this point in time by supporting a healthy economy, as Australia is relatively carbon efficient at production compared to many of our competitors.

If action to control climate change were to take place, we would strongly prefer a market based approach over "direct action" and are strongly opposed to all subsidies, including those for renewables.

Marriage

The Liberal Democrats fully support the Pirate Party's position to abolish the Marriage Act. We are very pleased another party is advocating abolishing the act as opposed to the current debate which seems to completely ignore that possibility. We regard marriage as a private matter in which the government should have no role beyond operating a register.

Drugs

The Liberal Democrats support the Pirate Party's position on decriminalisation of drugs. We also support complete legalisation of marijuana.

Foreign policy

We agree with Pirate Party on foreign policy.

It is Liberal Democrats policy to require 2/3rd majority of both houses of parliament before committing troops overseas, and an Act of parliament before treaties take effect.